

Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPEAT USUN 0148 ACTION SECSTATE JAN 17

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN 0148

DEPT PASS AFRICAN POSTS AS APPROPRIATE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: AF, PORG
SUBJECT: MISSION ASSESSMENT: AFRICAN ISSUES DURING THE 32ND UNGA

SUMMARY: THE FOLLOWING IS THE MISSION'S ASSESSMENT OF
AFRICAN ISSUES DURING THE 32ND UNGA. WE FARED WELL THIS
YEAR BECAUSE OUR ACTIONS IN NEW YORK DIRECTLY REFLECTED
US POLICIES TOWARD AFRICA WHICH ARE
MORE SENSITIVE TO AFRICAN ASPIRATIONS
AND MORE CONSTRUCTIVE IN THEIR SEARCH FOR SOLUTIONS OF THE
PARAMOUNT PROBLEMS ON THAT CONTINENT. OVERALL, OUR INVOLVE-
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MENT IN WESTERN INITIATIVES IN RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA GOT
FAVORABLE TREATMENT IN NEW YORK. AFRICAN CRITICISMS OF US
DURING THE UNGA CENTERED ON OUR INABILITY TO ACCEPT MEASURES
AGAINST SOUTH AFRICA THEY DEEMED NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE.
WE TOOK A STRONG LEADERSHIP ROLE AMONG THE WESTERN FIVE ON
AFRICAN ISSUES, BUT NOT WITHOUT TOUCHING A FEW RAW NERVES
AMONG OUR ALLIES. END SUMMARY.

1. HE SETTING: HERALDED BY LAST SPRING'S PRESIDENTIAL HUMAN RIGHTS STATEMENTS AND THE MONDALE/VORSTER MEEING, US AFRICAN POLICIES, K IN OUR VIEW, GREW STEADILY IN 1977 FROM SOLID ROOTS -- THE NATURAL ALIGNMENT OF OUR OWN VALUES WITH AFRICAN ASPIRATIONS FOR SELF- DETERMINATION AND MAJORITY RULE, AN APPRCIATION OF THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF BLACK AFRICA, K AND OUR OWN SELF-CONSIDENCE THAT US SMPATHY, COOPER- ATION AND ECONOMIC EXPERTISE WERE VITAL TOOLS IN BUILDING THE STABLE POLITICAL STRUCTURE IN AFRICA WE SOUGHT. THOUGH THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY PLEASED WITH CHANGED US STATEMENTS, INITIATIVES AND ATTITUDES ON AFRICA IN 1977. AFRICAN SKEPTICISM OF THE US ROLE IN AFRICA, WHILE DIMINSHED, REMAINS. THE SHARPEST AND MOST PERVASIVE AFRICAN CRITISM OF US POLICY TOWARD AFRICA IN 1977 REMAINED FOCUSSED ON OUR CONTINUING INABILITY TO DIMINISH OUR ECONOMIC INVOLVEMENT WITH THE AFRIKAANER REGIME IN SOUTH AFRICA.

2. LARGELY BECAUSEOF THE PRIORITIES OF THE NEW LEADERSHIP IN HE WHILE HOUSE AND IN THE MISSION, OTHER DEL- EGATIONS CORRECTLY SAW US VOTES AND SPEECHES ON AFRICAN ITEMS DURING THE 32ND UNGA AS DIRECT MANIFESTATIONS OF THE NEW US POLICIES TOWARD THAT CONTINENT AND NOT AS IS LATED TACTICS DEVELOPED TO BUY TIME OR SURVIVE DEBATES IN NEW YORK. AS A RESULT, US FORTUNES ON AFRICAN ISSUES THIS FALL AT CONFIDENTIAL

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THE UN ACCURATELY REFLECTED THE PERCEPTIONS OF OTHERS OF THE CURRENT STATE OF THOSE NEW POLICIES -- HOPEFUL, SENSITIVE, AND MATURING.

3. RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA: IN OUR VIEW, THE KEY ROLE THE US CONTINUES TO PLAY IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS IN BOTH RHODESIA ANDNAMIBIA HAS EARNED US A REAL AND GROWING DEGREE F RESPECT AMONG AFRICANS ON THOSE ISSUES. AT A MINIMUM THEY HAVE SO FAR BEEN WILLING TO GIVE THE WESTERN PEACE INITIATIVES TIME TO BE TESTED FAIRLY. THE DEBATES ON RHODESIA IN THE FOURTH COMMITTEE AND ON NAMIBIA IN PLENARY DURING THE GA WERE ROUTINE AFFAIRS, EVIDENCING A DECIDED UNWILLINGNESS, BENEATH THE PRO FORMA RHETORIC, TO RISK SIGNIFICANT CRITICISM OF THE WESTERN EFFORT. ON THE CONTRARY, MANY AFRICAN REPRESENTATIVES SPOKE WITH FAVOR OF THE WESTERN PEACE INITIATIVES; ONLY A FEW ON THE FRINGE DIRECTLY ATTACKED THEM OR THEIR SPONSORS. THERE WAS SOME SENSE IN THE CORRIDORS OF THE ACKNOWLEDGED IRRELEVANCE OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY TREATMENT OF THESE ISSUES IN THE FACE OF ONGOING NEGOTIATIONS AND POSSIBLE SECURITY COUNCIL

ACTION. THOSE WHO TOOK PAINS TO BE THOUGHFUL AND CONSTRUCTIVE IN THEIR SPEECHES BY AND LARGE SERVED NOTICE THAT AFRICA WAS WATCHING THE NEGOTIATIONS CLOSELY, WAS WORRIED ABOUT WESTERN RESOLVE, AND WOULD NOT HESITATE TO TRY TO PUSH US TO STIFFER STEPS IF THE NEGOTIATIONS FALTERED.

4. THE WORK OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL'S SANCTIONS COMMITTEE THIS FALL WAS A PALE, POLITE SHADOW OF ITS FORMER SELF. CONFRONTED BY US AND UK REFUSALS TO TAKE UP THE DISCUSSION OF EXPANDED SANCTIONS ON RHODESIA WHILE NEGOTIATIONS ON THAT SITUATION WERE IN PROGRESS, THE COMMITTEE, WITH SOME GRUMB-LING, ACQUIESCED. COMMITTEE WORK FINISHED THREE WEEKS EARLY WITH AN ABSENCE OF RANCOR THAT OLD-TIMERS TERMED UNPRECEDENTED.
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5. SOUTH AFRICA: US POLICIES TOWARD APARTHEID DREW BOTH PRASIE AND BLAME THIS FALL IN NEW YORK. MANY AFRICANS UNDERSTOOD AND APPRECIATED THE FACT THAT US CONDEMNATIONS OF APARTHEID WERETOUGHER BY FAR THIS YEAR THAN BEFORE, AND THAT A NEW ADMINISTRATION, IN LESS THAN ONE YEAR, COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO SHIFT A NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS WHICH HAD LARGELY BEEN INURED TO RACIAL INJUSTICE IN SOUTH AFRICA. IN AN UNPRECEDENTED STEP, THE NIGERIAN CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE AGAINST APARTHIED SINGLED OUT THE US FOR PUBLIC PRAISE FOR ITS FAR MORE POSITIVE VOTES ON THIS YEAR'S COLLECTION OF PLENARY ANTI-APARTHEID RESOLUTIONS.

6. AND IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL, AFRICANS SAW AND APPRECIATED THE US AS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND WESTERN AGREEMENT TO AN ARMS EMBARGO ON SOUTH AFRICA. STILL, WE CAME UNDER STRONG CRITICISM FOR OUR REFUSAL TO END ECONOMIC LINKS WITH SOUTH AFRICA. ON THIS ISSUE, THERE IS NOT AS YET A VIABLE MIDDLE GROUND. THE BITTEREST CRITIQUES OF US THIS FALL BY AFRICANS WERE ON THE ISSUES OF OUR ECONOMIC AND, TO A LESSER EXTENT, OUR PEACEFUL NUCLEAR COOPERATION WITH SOUTH AFRICA -- BOTH DURING THE SECURITY COUNCIL'S DEBATE ON SOUTH AFRICA AND THE 4TH COMMITTEE'S TREATMENT OF THE ECONOMIC ISSUES OF DECOLONIZATION.

7. OTHER ISSUES: FOR ANOTHER GROUP OF AFRICAN ISSUES AT THE UN, AFRICAN SENTIMENT WAS STRONG THAT "OUTSIDERS" AND PARTICULARLY "SUPER POWERS" NOT BECOME INVOLVED. THUS THE SAHARA WAS DISCUSSED ONLY GINGERLY AND THAT HORN OF AFRICA VIRTUALLY ESCAPED FORMAL UN ATTENTION. IN THE NIGER-NIGERIA SECURITY COUNCIL SEAT CONTROVERSY, WHERE OUR ACTIVE INTEREST WAS PERCEIVED BY SOME AFRICANS AS
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INTRUDING, UNINVITED, INTO THEIR "INTERNAL AFFAIRS, WE WERE SHARPLY BUT POLITELY CRITICIZED, DESPITE SUBSTANTIAL PRIVATE AFRICAN SHARING OF OUR INTEREST. IN THE AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFRICA, ANOTHER REALM IN WHICH NON-INTERFERENCE IS CHERISHED, THE SITUATION IN UGANDA SURFACED TOWARD THE END OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY. WHEN THENORDICS SPONSORED A RESOLUTION REQUESTING AN INVESTIGATION OF THE SITUATION, WE ADOPTED AN ACTIVE BUT DECIDEDLY BEHIND-THE-SCENES ROLE. WE BECAME MORE VISIBLE IN OUR EFFORTS ON BEHALF OF A NIGERIAN SPIN-OFF RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONS WHERE THEY DO NOT ALREADY EXIST. IN BOTH OF THESE CASES WE SOUGHT REAL IMPROVEMENTS IN HUMAN RIGHTS WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT AN OVERLY DIRECT US INVOLVEMENT COULD BE DETRIMENTAL.

8. SOVIET REACTION: OUR INTERESTS REGARDING AFRICA SUFFERED VERY LITTLE FROM SOVIET OR, EVEN LESS, CHINESE ATTACKS AT THE UN THIS FALL. COMMITTED TO FOLLOWING AN AFRICAN LEAD ON SOUTHERN AFRICAN ISSUES, THE SOVIETS, SO LONG AS AFRICAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS OUR INITIATIVES WERE BASICALLY SUPPORTIVE, WERE LEFT CARPING FROM THE BLEACKERS, SCORING A POINT ONLY WHEN THE FIVE WESTERN MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL WERE FORCED TO VOTE AGAINST AFRICAN-SPONSORED RESOLUTIONS FOR SANCTIONS ON SOUTH AFRICA. EVEN HERE, SOVIET POLICY WAS LIMITED TO FOLLOWING AN AFRICAN LEAD, WITH LITTLE OR NO ROOM FOR INDEPENDENT SOVIET INITIATIVES. THE CHINESE HAD EVEN LESS TO SAY ON SOUTHERN AFRICA. WHEN THEY DID SPEAK, IT WAS THE SOVIETS, NOT US, WHO WERE THEIR FAVORITE TARGETS.

9. WESTERN REACTIONS: US RELATIONS WITH OTHER WESTERN MEMBERS OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL ON AFRICAN ISSUES WERE COOPERATIVE BUT TOUCHY THIS FALL. OUR FRENCH AND ESPECIALLY OUR BRITISH COLLEAGUES KNOW FULL WELL THAT AFRICANS PRIVATELY CRITICIZE THE INFLUENCE THESE MORE

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CONSERVATIVE EUROPEAN STATES HAVE ON US POLICY TOWARD SOUTHERN AFRICA. FRANCE AND BRITAIN, CERTAINLY, HAVE RESENTED BEING PULLED IN MORE LIBERAL DIRECTIONS BY US THAN THEY ARE WONT TO GO ON THEIR OWN. ALL OF THE OTHER WESTERN FIVE HAVE CRITICIZED US FOR LACK OF FOREWARNING OF AMERICAN POLICY SHIFTS

N AFRICAN ISSUES. NONETHE-

LESS, OUR POLICIES AND INITIATIVES THIS YEAR AND AFRICAN
SUPPORT FOR THEM HAVE PUT US IN A POSITION OF DE FACTO
LEADERSHIP OF THE WESTERN FIVE FOR AFRICAN ISSUES AT THE UN.

10. CONCLUSION: IN SUM, THIS WAS A "GOOD GA" FOR US
ON AFRICAN ISSUES BECAUSE OUR POSITIONS HERE MIRRORED
THE STRENGTH OF OUR EVOLVING POLICIES FOR THAT CONTINENT.
AS THESE POLICIES CONTINUE TO BUILD A POSITIVE, CONSTRUC-
TIVE RECORD, FUTURE GENERAL ASSEMBLIES WILL BE EVEN
BETTER. IF NEGOTIATIONS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA SOUR, ON
THE OTHER HAND, AND WE ARE FAULTED, AN AFRICAN BACKLASH
COULD QUICKLY UNDERMINE THE DEGREE OF COOPERATION WE
ACHIEVED THIS YEAR IN NEW YORK. REGARDING SOUTH AFRICA,
EACH NEW CRISIS WILL REVIVE THE INEVITABLE
TENSIONS AT THE UN BETWEEN AN AFRICAN DEMAND FOR ISOLATING
SOUTH AFRICA ON THE ONE HAND AND AMERICAN COMMITMENT
TO MODERATE SOLUTIONS AND COMPLETING POLICY OBJECTIVES
ON THE OTHER. YOUNG. UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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